

*Recorded by Joseph Winder, January 1989*

Joe: Could you tell me who you are and where you were born and when you were born?

Victor: I'm George Victor Wilkins. Born in Peoa, Summit County, Utah on Oct. 22, 1902 of goodly parents.

Joe: Who were your parents?

Victor: George Edgar Wilkins, father and Zina E. Miles, mother. They were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple, married in there so I was born under the covenant. We lived there 'til we moved out here in 1908, the spring of 1908. But in the fall of 1907, we came out here, my father and two teams, and worked on the canal that goes to Ouray Valley, camped over there on the Sand Ridge. We was there about six weeks, then we went back to Peoa where we stayed the winter, then came here in the spring of 1908. Moved out here, lived in a house owned by John M. Davis.

Joe: Was that on South Vernal Avenue?

Victor: South Vernal Avenue about a mile out of town where we lived for several years, and I went to school from there, walked from there to the Vernal Central School.

Joe: That was about a mile walk from where...

Victor: Yes, about a mile walk from our home to school and back. We were holding church then in the school house, Vernal Second Ward. We used to come there for church, Sunday School, Priesthood Meeting, and Sacrament Meeting.

Joe: And had a break between...

Victor: Yes, we had quite a break in them days. They had Priesthood Meeting in the morning, then Sunday School at about 10:30, lasted 'til 12, then we went home for dinner, lunch, came back at 2 to 4 when they held Sacrament Meeting, generally two hours was what they held it then.

Joe: Was this arrangement between the school district and the church, they permitted the church to...

Victor: Yes, they permitted. When the two wards were divided, why the Second Ward met in the Central School with an agreement with the school board and the church, we used it on Sunday and went to school five days out of the week.

Joe: Do you remember any of your school teachers back at that time?

Victor: What was Mrs. Richardson's name, used to teach school, do you remember that, Joe? Charlie Colton was a school teacher there.

Joe: Mrs. Woods taught a long time. Charlie Lewis was another one.

Victor: I think that was a little before Charlie's time, there, when I first started out. Charlie Colton was the principal, I think, at that time. There was eight rooms there. When we went to school to use the first four rooms, we used the down floor, lower floor, the last four years of public school, we met in the upper four. When the bell would ring, we used to meet and form a line on the three doors, one east, one north, and one south and we'd march in there, the different classes and the different lines we had outside and march in and go up into the school where they had the desks and the different rooms.

Joe: At that time they had a big heater in each room, did they not?

Victor: Yes, we had a heater in each room and they used to have one in the hallway downstairs that they made a fire in the winter, it was cold, but they heated pretty good, we was kind of used to it in those days, so it wasn't too bad, but it was a nice building, brick building and it was a nice place to go to school and hold our services there too. The upstairs had a sliding door that went up into the ceiling, and they'd open that up when they'd have church or Sunday School to make two large rooms up there, they come together.

Joe: Sacrament Meeting and Sunday School.

Victor: Yes, we'd hold Sunday School meeting in those by putting those petitions, took them by hand and pushed them up and then brought them down so it made it pretty nice. We were instructed not to monkey with the desks or anything that was in them that would interfere with the schooling, the church was supposed to watch that and we were to take care of it. Of course we didn't have much vandalism in them days, and there were no trouble in that way. We were all pretty well LDS so we had no question on religion much in them days.

Joe: Can you remember a custodian at that time? You remember Mr. and Mrs. Robinson. They'd try to cross the street here, they were the grandparents of the Marshalls, Victor Marshall.

Victor: Yes, I remember them. He was a custodian, was he, then.

Joe: Yes, do you remember, he was the one that rang the bell.

Victor: Yes, that's right, I remember that.

Joe: They'd ring it a half hour before school was to start, we could hear it clear down to our place.

Victor: Yes, it rang all over the valley pretty well. We could hear it, we'd listen for it so we knew about how much time we had to get before school started, or church on Sunday, either, we kind of used it to let people know.

Joe: After you completed grade school, did you go to high school?

Victor: Yes, I went up to the high school, the academy, Uintah Academy, isn't that what they called it, Joe? I went up there two years.

Joe: At this time, did your folks have a homestead down in Ouray Valley?

Victor: Yes, they had that. Father came out in 1907 in the spring and filed on a desert entry. In those days they had desert entries and a homestead, too. That, as I remember, was about the last year that they had desert entry. He took up 160 acres in Ouray Valley as a desert entry. We was supposed to do so much work on it in order to prove up on it. That was one reason of coming out in the fall of 1907 and working on the Ouray Valley Canal was to help get the water, it came out of White Rocks and down through LaPoint and on the Sand Ridge and into Ouray Valley. Your folks was there too. James E. Hansen, old Jim Hansen, you remember him? He was ward clerk. He had 160 acres down there and several more here had different.

Joe: Orson B. Calder.

Victor: Orson B. Calder was another one that was down there, a very influential man, well-liked in the community.

Joe: Hyrum had a...

Victor: Did Hyrum have one down there too?

Joe: Yes, he had his was north of Orson's, and was next to where Pelican, where the highway runs.

Victor: Yes, I remember that when the Pelican Lake down there. At that time there wasn't any water in the Pelican Lake, that was before they started to keep water. We used to run our cows down on the summer, let them go down in that lake bottom and that's where they summered there.

Joe: Was your homestead about 1/2 mile east of where the highway runs now?

Victor: Yes a mile east of there, I believe, Joe, of where the highway is now. Durfey's had 160 acres north of us, then Jim Hansen had that, was that his name, the old man that used to play the violin, you remember? Bald headed, he was stake clerk here.

Joe: His whole family were musicians, weren't they.

Victor: Pete Hansen was his name, wasn't it?

Joe: Pete Hansen.

Victor: That's right.

Joe: I think he might have been the county clerk at one time also.

Victor: Yes, he was, I remember being county clerk.

Joe: Then there was Jenny Hansen and Norman Olson's wife was a daughter.

Victor: Yes, she was a sister, Pete Hansen's daughter. She played the violin, they were a musical family.

Joe: Can you remember when the Norman Olson family would come and play for Sunday School for a 1/2 hour before...

Victor: Yes, I remember that.

Joe: After we moved in the new chapel, that was.

Victor: After they built the chapel. Yes, I remember that. They weren't here when we first came here, were they Joe? They came later, the Olson family.

Joe: Yes. Now could you tell something about the building of the Second Ward Chapel on First West and...

Victor: Where the Senior Citizen Center is now?

Joe: Yes.

Victor: Yes, that's when Father was bishop. That's after we had moved from John M. Davis' place out to a place we had bought two miles and a half south of town from Bartlett, George Bartlett, as I remember. Do you remember that?

Joe: Yes.

Victor: That made us have to come two miles and a half to church and to school. I rode a horse then in that way. After WWI they was quite a necessity to have a chapel, although they knew money was tight. But Enos Bennion and your dad, E.J. Winder, and H. Belcher and Hatches were great boosters, and the Ashtons, Les Ashton owned a hardware store. He was awful good to help. Of course we went on the mountain,

they did, and got out the lumber. As I remember, it was sawed at Hick's Mill. We hauled it from there to the rim of the mountain where they transferred it onto sleighs. They hauled it there in the fall of the year, then the sleighs during the winter, we hauled it from there down here to the chapel. Lots of people took part in it, I was just a boy then when we hauled it from the top of the mountain down here, I drove one team, my dad used to tie a big pole or something behind the wagon or sleigh to hold it back. He used to use what they called a rough-block. A piece of chain to go around the runner on the sleighs to go down a steep hill. We came down off of there to Brush Creek to that cave over there where they had a little camp. They used to stay nights there. They'd get up in the morning and up there to the top of the mountain and get a sleigh-load of lumber and come down to this cave there in Brush Creek, and then we'd pull it from there to Vernal the next day. Then when it comes to getting the rock, we used to get that up at the Mail Draw. That's east of Steinaker Draw. I drove a team there hauling rock along with my father, he had a team, we had two teams. I drove one, just a boy, and he drove the other one. We hauled rock to the Vernal Second Ward chapel. Then I helped haul some sand from Jensen. We had a few loads, we got most of the sand out here south of town out where the Orson B. Calder farm used to be out there, just about a mile south of there, there was asphaltum sand. They didn't like it too well, but it seems it stayed there over the years. We hauled some from there a time.

Joe: Got gravel out that way also.

Victor: Yes, we got gravel out there, gravel beds they found around there. We used to plow it with a team, then shovel it into a wagon. Some of us we had use just regular wagon bed that came with wagons, others had what we called lumber they'd made. They used to dump them by raising the sides up and shaking and turning the planks over. But when we used the regular wagon bed, we had to shovel it in and shovel it out. That's where we got the sand and gravel that went into that building.

Joe: Who was in charge of the construction?

Victor: The bishopric of the Second Ward was really the head of it, I believe, Joe, and they all worked together. If Swain's, as I remember, burnt some brick over there that went into it. They all just worked, of course the government then in the county as I remember at that time was mostly the Mormon church and men were elected but they were Mormons so we didn't have any outside help much only just the Mormon people banding together. Enos Bennion was quite a contributor. The Hatches contributed quite a little bit of money. Les Ashton, that's Low Ashton and Clair Ashton and Ray Ashton's father, run this hardware store. When they needed little things, door knobs or locks or different things that came out of the hardware store, they used to go there and get them. When they went to pay for them, he was very good. He gave them lots and didn't charge them too much for what he did charge, but he was very influential and very helpful in building the Vernal Second Ward and those kind of men is what made it possible to build the Vernal Second Ward at the time they built it. The relief society, I remember them. Tom O'Neal, that's Rollin McNeill's father. He had a herd of sheep, I remember he was very, very good to give, too. Of course, H. Belcher worked in the bank as a cashier there in the Uintah State Bank, and that's how they got their money in

donations from the relief society. I remember they went out and gleaned fields for wheat, and they raised that and sold it to put into to help build that chapel. They had quite a time, I remember, when they put the heating system in as they didn't have any modern engineers much, only just men like the bishopric and the stake presidents worked together and they figured out their heating system and the way they fixed them up so it made it pretty nice.

Joe: Do you remember the toad stools that they had in the chapel part there, little places where the heat came up.

Victor: Yes, I remember them. They had them there and they used them. They warmed the building at feet. We used to like to get around them with our feet when we'd come in in the wintertime from out the different farms out here where we lived. Vernal City wasn't too big at that time. People mostly lived on little farms out around here. John T. Pope was another man, as I remember quite well, that helped a lot. Fred G. Bingham, and we had quite a lot of people that helped that way to build the Vernal Second Ward. When they dedicated it, it was paid for.

Joe: Who came and dedicated it? I believe it was Heber J. Grant.

Victor: No, I believe it was George Albert Smith, as I remember, is that right?

Joe: I believe Heber J. Grant dedicated the First Ward Chapel when they built that.

Victor: It comes to my mind that it was...

Joe: Anyway, about the time that that was finished and dedicated, you got married, didn't you?

Victor: Yes, shortly after that I got married. I acquainted the Southam's, were Mrs. Southam, Harry Southam's second wife was a Wardel. Her mother was a Wardel is the way it was, and they came from Peoa where we came from so we were acquainted with them after we got here, seemed like they came from the same place we did, we naturally got together. That's where I met my wife, Merle. We went together for two or three years there and then decided to get married. My father being bishop, he was very desirous that we be married in the temple. So we left here one day with a little Chevrolet car that he had, the second one he owned. We drove to Helper where we got on the train that night and rode into Salt Lake. Went through the Salt Lake Temple the next morning, got out of there in the afternoon and came back to Helper where we stayed with my father's sister. She lived there, they worked in the mines at that time. We stayed there all night and came home the next day. I was very glad of that, I got a wonderful woman. She proved to be outstanding in every way. Was the one that stuck by me through thick and thin, raised her family, gave them the best she had and her husband, too. Was always a firm believer in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, had a wonderful testimony of it. And Harry Southam did and his family, they came from Mormons. They started originally up in Wyoming. When they left Wyoming

and came down to Uintah Basin here and settled down here on Ashley Creek, and he married a sister to Joseph P. Hacking and John S. Hacking and she lived about a year and a half after he married her and she died. Then he married Isabelle Herbert who was my wife's mother. They lived down in Naples and we were up here in Second Ward.

Joe: Tell a little about your experience in going on a mission for the church.

Victor: I had two daughters when I was called, my wife had a son in January after I left. I left to go on my mission in October, the latter part, and the arrangements were made that her and the two girls and the other one would live with the Southam's and they would take care of them, and my father would take care of me on a mission. So that's the way I went was out there. When I got to the mission home, Don B. Colton was in charge, him and his wife of the mission home. I knew them well so the week we were there, at that time they gave us a week there to train us a little because we were from out here in the sticks and going east, why they figured we ought to know a few of the, how to be nice and so forth in eating and like that. Sister Colton, I remember, showed us how to use the different forks and knives, what they were for so if we invited to any homes, she showed us how to do that and gave us many other very valuable instructions. Don B. Colton and my father were very close, Father being bishop. Don B. used to be president of the stake before he was elected to go back to the Congress of the United States. When he left that, he came to Salt Lake and was head of the mission home there. Father always thought a lot of him, all the people did out here, thought a lot of Don B. Colton. He was a wonderful speaker and was a wonderful leader and he helped, as I remember, he was just about the first president that I got acquainted with, although I remember S.R. Bennion. An instance back there, they had a piano and my father bought it, wanted to learn music, but I never was very musically inclined and I didn't take advantage of it like I should have done. But on the mission field when I got out there they sent me to St. Louis Missouri to work in the Missouri district. There was about 30 missionaries there at that time. After I'd been there a year and a half, I was called to be district president, and at that time, they started to reorganize church to investigate the prophet Joseph and Hyrum and his wife. They put on what they called a spiritual revelation from the Lord where the bodies was, but it took them quite a while to find the bodies, but they found them while I was there on my missions. And President Bennion had me keep pretty close tab of it, it was in Hannibal, wasn't too far north of St. Louis, and he came over there several times. One time just before they found them, Pres. Heber J. Grant came through there on the train and stayed all night at the hotel and Pres. Bennion called me up the next morning at 5:00 and had me go down there and meet with them. We'd had a little polygamy trouble and they wondered how that was coming. I had breakfast with Pres. Grant and Pres. Bennion there in his room, had it served there, that's the first time I'd ever saw anything like that, that a hotel served a meal in a room, but they brought it in there. I was there about two hours and a half. Pres. Grant talking practically all the time. Pres. Bennion didn't say too much, but Pres. Grant was preaching the gospel to us and telling us different things, telling us things about polygamy and why it was abolished and was a very energetic, very nice man to listen to. They were very closely watching these

graves in Hannibal, although Pres. Grant said they knew where they were buried all the time, but they didn't tell the Reorganites. Of course, when they found them, then more came out of the history. The finder of how they were buried said he told us there one instance. Before Joseph's wife died, Joseph Smith's wife, Emma Smith, she had them help her to the door of the Nauvoo house there and showed them where to go to dig her grave. When she died, they dug down, they hit a corner of a rough box so they knew that was in the right place, so they buried her by the side of her husband there when she died. So that's where they found them, the Reorganized Church. Pres. Bennion went up when they dug them up and he said there was no question but what that was them. He could see where the ball had hit Hyrum. He could see where that was so there was no question about that. Pres. Grant was keeping in touch with him. It was quite an experience to be there when that happened. I have those papers now that was wrote when they found those bodies and all about it.

Joe: After you returned from your first mission, is that about the time that you started in the trucking.

Victor: When I was here, after I came home in the spring of '28, I worked here farming, working for farmers around here, Lynn Ashton, worked for him a while and different ones. Then I decided that I would like to run a school bus, the school up here started to hire buses. I had a truck we'd bought there and they wanted..., but before I bought it they had promised me the job. I went to the Uintah State Bank at that time to borrow the money and they let me have it to buy the truck if my father would sign with me, which he did. H. Walter Woolley was there at that time, that's how I got acquainted with him and J.K. Bullock, those kind of men who were the leaders here in this community. They loaned me the money to buy this truck and we built a box on the back of it and built a ladder affair that fastened onto the box down at the ground and a door in the building we built on it on the back of it there where they rode, we had it enclosed. Then we made some seats to go down each side and two down the center and we'd open that door from the outside and the kids would go in there, and I drove school bus there for three or four years. Then came the Depression when Roosevelt bought the cattle and destroyed some of them and hauled them to Salt Lake, why I started to use this bus then hauling those cattle and I bought another one, went back East to get the school buses, I took a contract from the school board, they bought Diamond T's and I took this Diamond T truck I had and took that box off from it and bought another one that I bought here to haul cattle with. Then I bought a school bus. Might be interesting to know that Fran Felch and Tom Karren was running Utah Motor at that time and that's how I come to have a Diamond T truck, so they thought I could go back and get those three trucks...  
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...car and they'd taken the body that had been wore out. We fastened the body on this truck and I took three drivers and another man to drive my bus back and I drove the new truck back and we went to Richmond, Indiana where we got those buses. They were superior buses. Ray Reeder went with me, he was on the school board at that time. My cousin went, Alma Wilkins, with me. I forgot the man's name from over to Roosevelt, we took one of them over there, he went to drive his back. Then when we



got there we just took the body off of the truck and put the school body on it, and got that arranged and they'd ordered the truck out of Chicago, Illinois, the Diamond T, I rode the train from Indiana there to get the truck and they met me in St. Louis and then we came on west with those buses. That's the first manufactured buses that we had here in Uintah County.

Joe: How were the roads at that time?

Victor: The roads were not too good, there were some paved and graded, but were mostly just dirt roads and we had to be pretty careful the way we went coming over the mountains, not to hit a storm or something that you couldn't come through. But they weren't too good of roads, they hadn't got to making the roads like we have today at that time.

Joe: Did you come back through Denver and Craig?

Victor: We came back to Denver and over the summit and into Steamboat Springs and Craig and into Vernal.

Joe: The roads were mostly gravel from Steamboat Springs this way.

Victor: Yes, mostly gravel and dirt. Quite a lot of dirt roads between Steamboat Springs and Vernal. That was about the time they started to haul gilsonite with trucks from the gilsonite mine to Artesia and then to Craig where they met the Moffatt road and unloaded the gilsonite onto there, so they kept the roads fairly good, but storms we had to watch out pretty close for.

Joe: Was that about 1935 or '36?

Victor: Right along in there, that's right.

Joe: A little later they started paving the roads between here and Craig, didn't they?

Victor: Yes, making them better. Different stretches was given. J.J. Stanton, he started to haul the gilsonite and he was quite influential in national and state government and got state help and like that to fix the roads, and they begin to improve them quite a bit. That's when I started to haul livestock was when Franklin D. Roosevelt bought those cattle and we hauled a lot of them to Salt Lake from here. After that there, there hadn't been many sheep move out of here, they used to trail some to Watson. They'd put them on the railroad to Watson, then they shipped them to Mack, Colorado where they had to transfer them from the narrow gauge onto the wide gauge railroad and from there to Denver or whichever way they went. I hauled a few that way, then Joseph Hacking and Philly Stringham and Bry Stringham called me in one day and wanted to know why we couldn't haul them from Diamond Mountain to Green River, that seemed to be the best market because that was the only Union Pacific over there. Then they could load them on the train and go to Denver or go into the Omaha or those

markets there without having to transfer them and trail them to here. They had been trailing a few to Green River City, Wyoming then. But when you take a bunch of lambs off from ewes, they're awful hard to handle, off from their mothers, and they don't know what to do. They used to take a few old ewes along with them to try to trail them, but they had quite a loss. These three men, Philly Stringham and Joseph Hacking and Bry Stringham, they had quite foresight, they said they couldn't see why, the road wasn't too good, but they said we can be careful. So I started to haul them. We called in Walt Collier, he had a truck, and we talked to him and me and we said, well we'd try it. So the first we tried to haul was Philly Stringham and Joseph Hacking. Bry trailed his the first year, but we found out that worked pretty good. There was some loss on the trucks, cause we didn't know just how to petition them off in there, we just run them in there and they'd pile up going around them turns. So the second year, Clyde Eaton came in and he helped us with them. Then we got to putting petitions in, but that didn't seem to work too good. So then Ernest Caldwell in that year too, he had a truck and we decided to lay them down, which proved to be quite effective for that time, or we'd only haul about 75 of them to a truck. They would just use bob-tail trucks, 12 and 14 foot lengths, and we fixed decks so that they feed the two-by-fours on the side and decks through them and we'd pick them lambs up and lay them in there like you'd lay sardines in a can. Although they got quite dirty but yet our loss was very null. They couldn't get on one another, we had the decks low enough so they couldn't climb on one another and they'd just have to lay there, they'd try to get up, but they couldn't get up and they lay there. So that's the way we hauled them going to Green River. About the third year we started over there, we figured that out. Then they took to using it out of the Uintah Basin, other truckers had started up, started using the same thing, so for several years we laid them down. Then as we got larger trucks we decided to put petitions in a little closer, which we found worked pretty good, because that was awful hard work to lift them lambs into the truck and then lift them into the decks. We didn't know they'd run up a shoot. Then we learned that you could run them up a shoot and we could run them into the pens in the trucks so that worked good. Then we begin to get semis that were larger and we got to where we could haul 200 to a semi and by petitioning them off like that, our loss was very null, they never did have any trouble with the sheep men, they were always very cooperative and worked with us and helped us, and as far as one dying, they never paid any attention to it and we worked with them the same way. It was quite a thing going over the road over the mountain to Manila then across that desert into Green River. When we first started to haul, it took Dick DeJournette and men like that up on the mountain, Harold Reeder, they didn't want to try it out. But after they saw the way it worked, and one time, before Ford DeJournette came in, he was about the last one to let us haul his. The fall before going over, he hit a storm over the other side of Manilla. The sheep scattered all over that country and down on the Green River and he had quite a time. He lost quite a lot of sheep, couldn't find them where they was, so he told me, "Well, you can figure on mine next year." So that made us so we were hauling all of them. We used to line them up, given them a day that we'd take them, and they'd work with us, if there was a storm, why they'd wait until the storm was over, then we'd start in hauling them again. Then they begin to buy them to go into the fields in Denver on the eastern slope, so then they decided the roads was getting better to go to Craig than it was to go to Green River. They got this road fixed up, the gilsonite

had been going, so then we started to haul sheep and cattle to Craig, connect with the Moffatt line there, and that proved to be very effective. That's the way it went the rest of the time that I was in the trucking business. Although we used to haul to Heber and we used to haul to Price, they received these lambs one time in Price a couple or three years after we started to haul them, but that was it. Walt Collier and myself hauled the first lambs that went from Diamond Mountain on a truck to Green River and we hauled, the rest of us, Ern Caldwell and Clyde Eaton and all of us together hauled the first lambs that went to Craig from up on Diamond Mountain. At first on Diamond Mountain when we went to Craig, we had them come down to Jensen and the CC's had built a corral there across the bridge and they used to bring their herds and come down there, we'd take the lambs out there and haul them to Craig. But as the fat market got a little better, they got so they wanted us to haul them off from the mountain so that they could get them there in a day, not to lose so much weight. So we started hauling them off of Diamond Mountain straight through to Craig. It took us a day to make the round-trip. That's the way we ended up getting them to Craig which was the best market we had, then they went into the fields in eastern slope on the wheat fields in the fall 'til they'd fatten up and then they'd put them on the market.

Joe: Along about this time, did you get into the bus transportation business too?

Victor: Yes. When I went and got these Diamond T buses for the school board and mine, that's when I started really in the bus business hauling school kids. Then Pres. Johnson and Bishops, they said, well why in the world couldn't you run a bus to Salt Lake. So we started to haul with a bus, they were superior buses, they weren't like the ones that we have now, but they were fairly nice buses, they were warm. It took us a little longer to go the Salt Lake with them, but we used to go out there first, we stayed all night and came back the next day. But then they decided by leaving early in the morning, we could go out and they could do a couple of sessions and then we could come back as it progressed. Then as the buses got better, we bought some 4104's that were manufactured by General Motors, which was a pretty nice bus. Then we got to running pretty good, they were faster than the older ones we had so that we made pretty good time going to Salt Lake there to the temple. We'd make those trips every day when they wanted to go with the stakes and the wards. You know how it's grown since to today. I was out there yesterday and back, we took out 47, 47 passenger bus. We left here at 12:00 was in Provo at 12:30, got in two sessions and back here 9:00 last night. So that's how it's improved. Now we have three of those buses we're running to the temple and running all over, charter buses. Then I might go back a little bit. I started trucking, of course my boys came along, as I came home, then Farron was born while I was gone. Then as he got big enough to work, he started helping me. We got a truck and he worked with me. As Wayne came along he started to work with me and as Clyde came along why he went in with me a little, and Edgar, the youngest boy, he went a little bit. But he afterwards changed and married a girl from Denver. They came here and bought a ranch out on Willow Creek, her father did, and that's where he met her, she went to school up here. Then he married her then he moved to Denver where he's lived ever since. But Farron has never worked for anybody else, only with me and then this business. When he was called to the army, Wayne was a little too young to go, but

Farron went, I didn't think I could hang, but he encouraged me to hang on, so I stayed with it, and when he came back, why I said to him, "Well son, you've been gone now to the army, if you don't want to come back into this, why now would be a good time for you to think about it." He said, no, he said "I'd like to come back", and he said, "Let's make a company out of it." He said, "We'll work together," he said, "I think that's the best," he said, "I've seen all I want of the world and I'd rather come back." Wayne, of course, at that time he'd grown up a little bit. He helped me a lot, he drove when he was very young. He was only about 15 years old when Farron went into the army and I had to have a little help so I took him in and coming out of Heber one time, we'd took some livestock out there and the cops weren't too thick in them days, but this one stopped him. He'd left a little ahead of me and I was a little behind him, he said, "I didn't know who you was, you didn't look to me big enough to drive that truck." He said, "Who are you?" He told him that he was my boy, and he said, "Well, I know Victor", by that time I got there and we talked it over and he said, "Well, he's pretty young," and I said, "Well, he's driving my outfit and he drove before with me." I used to always take them with me, they liked to go along and I liked to have them. That's been one of the greatest things in my life has been my family. My wife in back of me helped me all she could and my boys and my girls have all been the same way. They backed me up and worked with me. Wayne, he wanted to go on then driving as he grew up and as Farron came back from the army we got more of those bump-tail trucks that we're using, that's before we got the semis, and they started to drive. So then we got to where we were running three trucks. I driving one then Wayne driving one and Farron driving one. We worked together that way, and as we decided to make it a company, we first called it the Wilkins Trucking. Then we changed it to Wilkins Transportation. These two boys along with Clyde helped too. But as Clyde went to the army, and when he came back, he had quite a talent with electricity and TV's and radios was getting in there. So he got a little help from the government and went to school and learned the TV. Of course people in Vernal all know Clyde Wilkins and his experience with TV and the way he helped and worked with people and fixed them up and he got to where he was an awful good hand, and yet he never was where he couldn't help us. Any time we needed a little extra help why Clyde would come in and he'd drive and help us. As Edgar grew up, he was the same way. He went with us, taught him how drive wool, trucks loaded with wool, and he'd always go until he married this girl. Her father sold out on Willow Creek and went back to the carpenter business in Denver, he was a carpenter, so Edgar, he wanted to go there and kind of liked that. He didn't take too much to the trucking, although he was an awful good hand, and awful good driver. So he went to Denver and went into the home building there. Built a lot of homes in Denver and built until the depression kind of hit here a few years ago on the building. He got out with a little money, a hard worker, and he was always a worker. Had a good head on him and I had always taught my boys to try to stay within a boundary where they could pay out. Because nobody had ever given me anything, I had to get out and work it. I felt like that was a good thing to try to bring them up with the idea that we had to pay our bills. Although he was never turned down, shortly after I started in the trucking business, I changed from the Uintah State Bank and went over to the Bank of Vernal, N.J. Meagher, that's where my father dealt when he first come out here. John M. Davis and John H. Reeder were directors in the Bank of Vernal. My father dealt there when he first came. But he had H. Belcher,

when he was called to be bishop, H. Belcher was a counselor and E.J. Winder. Two very wonderful men and three of them worked together here for 17 years in the bishop's business, but Brother Belcher was in the Uintah State Bank so he got us what little business we had in them days. We didn't have much. My father never made much money or any of the rest of these, although we always had plenty to eat and plenty to wear because my father paid an honest tithing, that's one thing he always done, he said, I owe the Lord and he always taught me the same thing, to pay an honest tithing. Because the Lord is the head of this thing, this is His religion, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, has always been that way, and I've been taught that. After filling a mission my testimony grew and I knew this thing was true. My grandfather Wilkins landed in Peoa, Summit County, that's when he came across the desert, plains in the hand cart company, and he said, in coming across there, he used to take his shoes off and tie the laces together and pack them around his neck. I said, "Why did you do it?" He said, "Well, I knew this thing was true," and he said, "I didn't know whether I'd ever get another pair of shoes or not," and he said, "As I looked at those prairies we came across and the sage brush, I thought I better take care of them." I said "Well, have you ever been dissatisfied?" He said, "No, Victor, this thing is true, I know it, I knew it when I joined in England. I had a testimony that this gospel was true, and it's grown and grown as I came along." He came into Peoa and settled there where he started out as he got organized there. He was their first bishop for a long time in Peoa, then he was a patriarch. Then the Uintah Basin was throwed open when we came here and he decided he wanted to come out here. The stake president come to him there in Peoa and said, "Brother Wilkins, you're too old to go out there in that country to start over. You crossed the plains and come here and you better stay here." He said, "I told them no, I'm going to have a large posterity and I've got to have room for them to grow. So I'm going out in the Basin." "Well," the president said, "It would be all right for your family to go, but you better stay here." "No," he said, "I'm going with my family." So he come out here. Father came here to Vernal, the rest of the Wilkins family had 13 children, he did, went up in the Mountain Home territory where he settled that. At one time, Mountain Home, Jim and his sons and daughters owned practically all the land around what they call Mountain Home, the different sections there that they took out under, that was homestead act that they took that out under. My grandmother Wilkins was quite a hand, she was a mid-wife. Brought a little over 300 babies into the world in that section and never lost a one. She felt like that was a wonderful record, and it was. Grandfather gave lots of patriarchal blessings, just to name one of them, I found here about a year ago, that he gave Acel Manwaring's wife her blessing. I didn't know that, but he gave a lot of blessings over there. When he died, President Smart talked to his funeral and he said, "This is one man that I can say has paid an honest tithing." That was a wonderful thing to me. But I'd learned this, that if a man like that would leave England as a boy, 14 years old and his mother, cross the plains and then in his testimony the last time he bore it to me, he said, "The gospel's true, Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God." He said, "Victor, live the gospel, it's true. There's no question at all." My father lived the same kind of a testimony. Kine Hatch was talking to him over here one time, just a few years before he died and he said to Kine, he said, "Well," they were talking about the different things that happened over the years, when the flu was on here, the way they worked and like that and Kine

was quite a hand. Kine didn't take too much interest in the church, he was a Latter-Day-Saint, but he was a helper. He said, "We used to dig the graves and we buried the dead and held the funerals when the flu was here," and they were talking there and Father said, "Well, Kine, you've got to get through the temple." Kine said, "You believe it don't you bishop?" He said, "Yes, I know it. If it wasn't true, I've wasted my life, but I'm satisfied with it because Kine, it's true, now you must get you and your wife through the temple." Kine and his wife went through the temple before he died. So that's the kind of training I was trained under. We never had tea nor coffee in our home, only when my grandmother Wilkins would come down, she drank a little tea. She liked a little green tea and we used to get a little when she'd come down to visit us. They'd only come about once every year because in them days we just traveled with horses, we didn't get around like we do now. We learned the Word of Wisdom and to pay our tithing and to live the gospel and that's what I learned on my mission was that thing. When they unearthed the prophet Joseph Smith's and Hyrum's and Emma's bodied and reburied them, the many things that happened strengthened my testimony all the way through. Now in these later years, my family working with me has been one of the greatest things in the world. I thought a lot about it and wondered if I'd done the right thing and yet one of my grandsons said the other day, "Grandpa, I'm going to try to get into business. I don't want to work for the other man, I don't know whether I'll have a job tomorrow or the next day." I said, "Well, son, that's why I've hung on to this business, I've had times that I could have sold it, but I've kept it because of my family, because the greatest thing in the world as I've said before is your family." And these here four boys of mine, I love them, they've stayed with me, we've been many a miles with these trucks but Wayne and me have done most of the driving in the later years, more than Farron. Because Farron when he was in the army learned to work on the Detroit Diesel in the navy, they had them, they called them the green marine, but they were the General Motors Diesel, and that's what we've always run is General Motors Trucks. We run the Diamond T for a while, but then they were a company that wasn't too well established, so I switched to General Motors and where I've been all the way through is with General Motors. When we were into the bus business, of course those buses are powered by Detroit Diesel. Well Farron understood them so he's always took the shoulder of the work here at home, we built garages and he's kept those outfits running when anything's wrong, just like day before yesterday, we found the bellows on one of them that was rusted out inside, we didn't know it and we had to have it fixed. Well, we went to Provo and got some parts we had from Utah Valley Transfer there, they work with us and are very good with us, we can get anything they got and they can get anything we got. We went out there and got those parts and brought them back yesterday on the bus that went to the temple and today is Friday and Farron is putting them in for that bus to go back to Provo tomorrow. So Farron has been, over the years, he's been the one that has took care of the garage business and kept them running and he's an awful good hand. The one thing I'd like to say about my boys. Over the years I've sent them long ways, Wayne has drove buses from one ocean to the other ocean. Never no worry of drinking, never no worry of smoking, never no worry of them doing things they shouldn't, they never gambled, they have checkbook since we went in together and formed the company, they've wrote checks the same as I have. I'd like to say this, there I picked my boys in and we just split the money. When I turned it over to

them a few years ago when we come to figure it up, we just figured thirds, the two boys took two thirds and I took a third and I don't think they owe me a thing because they've more than paid me. The confidence I've had in them and we could go to sleep at nights and not worrying whether they'd be drunk or anything like that, we knew they wasn't. People over the Basin we haul for, they all speak well of them, they say, "Brother Wilkins, your family, you don't need to worry about them boys." So I love them and I wouldn't take anything in the world for the experience I've had with my family. Now a few words about my good daughters. They're wonderful girls, Myrtle, the oldest, Velda the second one, and Elaine the third one. They married good, the oldest one married Howard Walker out here and they've raised a good family. Velda married Alan Gentry out here, and they've raised a nice family. Elaine married Gene Hall up here, they've raised a nice family, didn't have any of their own, but they adopted three. And we love them three, and that's been a great instruments to us, the way they took them in and raised them, it's been worth a lot. It's like the girl they've got, they've got two boys and a girl, and the girl bore her testimony up here and thanked them and her Father in Heaven for the privilege of coming to a home where she was treated like that. She said they are Mother and Father and we love them. And they did, but my family are all of that order, they all love one another, we have a large family, we had seven children, we've got about 60 great-grandchildren now, no that's 35 great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren about 60. They multiply faster when they get up into the great-great than they do down here. They've always stuck with me, those girls have helped me, they went with me, they've helped load wool, they've helped load sheep, and their mother, been one of the greatest. I got a dandy woman and she's been a mother, she's made a home. These boys and girls as they've always had a home to come home to. She's never worked anywhere else, the Lord has been good to us. He's gave us the ability, I've never been sick to amount to a hill of beans, I've always been able to work and she's always been the same way. She always had a home, she had plenty to eat and they always liked to come home. As I meet people around here in the Basin that went to school with them, Roy Showalter's daughter said to me here a while back, "My we used to love to come down there and have hot bread and butter and honey to your home." Or they said, "Mrs. Wilkins was always there and we learned to love them." They had a lot of more friends and that's the way they've been. In working, they worked in the church, they lived their religion, and they're taking care of me now. Since the Lord's seen fit to take my wife and leave me here, why it's quite lonesome but I had her 64 years, that's a long while and she was always true blue. She always had a home and I knew that if I got home she'd be there and I knew she'd take care of them boys and girls, and she did.

## **2VICTOR WILKINS, PART 2**

Joe: Victor, maybe we could go back just a little and you could tell something about the contract you had with the Gilsonite company.

(Tape blank for 1 1/2 minutes)

Victor: You'd like me to talk a little about the Bonanza deal like that.

Joe: Yes.

Victor: A couple of years after I started out in the trucking business, I changed banks from the Uintah State Bank over to the Bank of Vernal. Mr. Meagher, when I went in and talked to him about it, although my father had advised me to deal with the Bank of Vernal, I started out with Uintah State and then changed over there. When I talked to Mr. Meagher, one thing that has made a great point in my life, he told me, he said, "Now look here, Victor, if you want to deal with me, deal with me. I don't want you going across the road or going anywhere else. If you want to go there first, go ahead, don't you deal with me unless you want to." Then he said, "But if you're going to deal with me, I'll give you a little advice. Deal with me don't deal with all banks and everyone scattered around because then I never know what you're at or where you are nor what you've got nor what you haven't got or how deep you're in or anything about it. If you deal with me, then I'll always know where you're at, and when you need money I'll know what you've done before and what you do and do with me. I think I can handle you." I said, "Well, that sounds alright." He said, "Victor, that's the way to do it, because then you won't be in trouble." I've found out as I went by, I dealt with one man that didn't pay his bill and he was dealing here at the Bank of Vernal and I went in to the Bank of Vernal about it. Mr. Meagher said, "Well, you should have come quicker, he's gone, but I'll see what I can do." But he said, "Victor, that's what I meant. Now he's moved to another bank and I don't know anything about him. If you stay with your banker than you just go along fine and you don't have any troubles." And I found out that that was true. As I bought things over the country wherever my credit was needed to be traced back, he had already told me that I shouldn't refer to him, the Bank of Vernal, he said when they need references you refer to the Bank of Vernal. I found out that that was true, because when I bought things around over and they've called up to find out who I was or if my check was good or who Wilkins Transportation was, Mr. Meagher was able to tell them, "You bet ya," he told them they could cash that check. I found out that that was worth a lot to me, because if I met different men of different banks they said, "Yes, we know all about you through the Bank of Vernal." So that has been a good guideline and he said, "Victor, try to stay within your means. Don't buy something you can't pay for." I've tried to make it that way. I told my boys when we started out together, when Wayne and Farron and me formed the company and decided to go, that we'd try to stay within our means. The money we'd get for wages, if we had it, we got it. If we didn't have it, we had to get out and earn it. That's the way we've tried to do and that's been one of the foundations of this business, those two boys, more because they've stayed



with me all the way through. The others helped too, they were the same way, but all three of us has always worked to make this thing go. We haven't had to hire much work because I've had four boys and the business I've had, I haven't increased enough to get so big that I needed to go too far away, because I was scared of it. That's why I quit the trucking business and went into the bus business was because the trucks got to where they had to go to California and all over and they would be on the road all the time. The boys didn't like it and I didn't like it. So we went into the bus business and why we went in, Bonanza out there needed buses. They decided to bus their men out there to work. So that's the way we started the contract there because that was here, we made three trips a day, and we were able to drive it and take care of the bus and keep it going. Bonanza worked with us and we kept working on it until we got to where it was a fairly good paying position. Those men out there that run Bonanza Plant, they worked with us, Paul Borden and those kind of men were very good to us, and Mr. Jones that worked out there was another good one. He worked with us and we always had those good working conditions. I can say this, that's one thing that made us go is because we worked united. My boys and me have never had any troubles. We've never had any disputes to amount to a hill of beans, maybe some little thing come up, but when it come to running the thing, I've got to hand it to them. They've always acknowledged me as being their father, they've always acknowledged Farron as being the next in line, and they've always acknowledged Wayne as being the next and we've worked that way. Since the business has been with them two boys, Farron has kind of taken over, as I quit and worked out. I got too old for insurance, got so high and they wouldn't let a man over 75 drive, so I'm 86 now, so I had to quit driving. That's been quite a lick on me because I like to drive the buses and like to be with my boys. They've taken it over and they don't have a bit of trouble, they go along and my grandsons working with them, we don't have any trouble with them at all. They don't steal anything or take anything and we all work here, there's nothing hidden about anything in this business that these two boys don't know it all. The girls know what's going on too, and they all band together and we go along.

Joe: Did the closing down of the mines out there somewhat eliminate your grandchildren?

Victor: Yes, when this depression come along and they started laying them off now, the mine, we stayed on quite a while, and Brett was driving, Wayne's oldest boy, it was figured that going on we didn't know when they was going to quit, but they finally told us, gave us about six months, told us they was going to quit running the bus and that has made quite a little bit of difference in our grandsons. Prior to that since I quit in '75, my grandsons have been driving, of course they were driving a lot before. But since then from then until Bonanza quit, why we had quite a bit of work and kept two of my grandsons and Farron and Wayne working here with it with what Clyde and I want to say here, Clyde, a wonderful boy, the way he worked here with his TV business and all, and yet he was always very considerate of this trucking business. The fact of the matter is, I gave him some stock in the trucking business, my part of it, when I quit so that he would have an interest and he always knew he had a job. I always felt like this, that this business here, I knew it would never, as far as I could see, be a money making

proposition, but it would make a living proposition. We always had a job. And the boys have said to me since what that has meant of all this laying off since there, of course they don't remember the first Depression, WWI, because they wasn't old enough. But they remember this one. And when we see men laid off in every direction, they can see, although we don't pay the highest wages in the world, but we do pay enough that they can live. We're not any of us rich, not any of us. I have never taken anything out of this outfit that I didn't figure I had it coming. I drove a good car, they drove a good car, but we've never taken money away and gambled it in any direction, we've left it in the company, we've worked together and they all know what the buses bring in and when they make a certain trip, they know what that bus is getting and they know that driving it they can have a percent of it and that's the way we work and they've got something to live and something to buy them some fuel and clothes and something to eat. We work along that line and they work with us. They've never been any other way, only congenial and done that way. I'm so proud the way they do no, Farron being the head of it and doing like he's doing and working with Wayne. Now Farron has been called into the bishopric a couple of years ago, which we're very proud of. It takes a lot of his time. Along comes Wayne, just right there where he's always been, go ahead Farron, I'll take the bus, you go ahead and take care of the meeting. Let's see, you've got this meeting coming up, well, then you don't go on the bus, we can send so and so and they plan the thing out to work that way. Then one thing above all is that wonderful wife of mine. She's always been here, she's always been home. When I'd call home I could get her. When they'd call home, we knew she'd answer. She knew what was going on, she could tell them just the same as I could, and she's always been right in it right up on the top and knew just what was going on. We didn't have anything to hide from her, we're all together. They didn't have anything to hide from her, I didn't mind calling her if I was in a hotel in Denver, I knew there was nobody there only me or they were there, we knew what was on and where we was if we needed to get one another. But Mother has been one of the main things that has held this thing together has been my wonderful wife and I thank the Lord for her very much from the bottom of my heart because she's been a hard worker, she's never wasted any money or wasted anything. She was a great conserver, she knew how to take care of this thing if my boys would be off and I wasn't here, and they called to want to know information, she always had it because she took care of the books until we went out of the business, she always took care of the books and knew everything that was going along. So that's what made Wilkins what it is, is all of them working together and all involved in the gospel. They're all Mormons, every one of them, and they're all been baptized and born under the covenant which I am so thankful for, my brothers and sisters, that's my testimony to you along that line. Stay with the gospel, it's true. As that old gray-haired grandfather of mine, that's why I come because he said, "I knew it was true." That's been a great testimony to me.

Joe: Tell me a little about your connection with the river runners.

Victor: A few years ago after we got started in the bus business, the river runners started to go. Hatch's down here were starting then to come down the river in pretty good groups and they had to have some way to get them to the river and from the river.

So we started out with Hatch's a little bit, then other Western River came in, and other river-runners come, and us being, holding the permits here of Colorado and all over through my earlier years with trucking, I got those transferred to the Wilkins Transportation so that we had the same rights there to haul people back and forth. The last 15 years, 20, since Hatch's and those started out in the river run, we have run buses on these rivers hauling people to and from the river and hauling them to Salt Lake to the airports and to Rock Springs to the airport there and taking them cross country. Then as we got these better buses these last ones here, Wayne and Farron decided the boys coming along and things looked good, we would increase this bus business and start going with charter trips all over the United States. That has been a wonderful business, because back of it all, these boys were sound, you could depend on them and they'd do what they had to do, they'd take those buses, and they'd make the runs and you knew they wasn't drunk or anything and that they'd be there and they'd take care of the people. Wayne and Farron has built a wonderful record and also their boys, Todd and Brett, and Stewart, is Farron's boy, they've built a wonderful record, and I find it all through the years, I haul different people, they'll say, "Well, you've got some dandy boys, we don't care who you send." When they call for the buses now to go on these river runs or on any of these charters which we have quite a lot of, they never have any question, they said, "Well, you'll send who? Well, that's alright, that's fine and dandy, he's a dandy driver and we feel perfect having him so you just send him along." I always get the report back that they've done a good job, so that's one thing that has made the river runs. And we haven't had any competition because we don't have any finding fault with them, the boys do a good job and our prices, we've tried to keep them where ordinary people can hire them and work with us.

Joe: Could you make an estimate of about how many 100,000 miles you, yourself, have driven trucks and buses?

Victor: Golly, Joe, you've got me there. You want to know how miles I've driven? I drove a lot. I don't know, I wore several trucks out and the buses there.

Joe: What would you put on, 300,000 miles on a motor?

Victor: Yes, we'd put 3-400,000 on these bus motors and we've overhauled all of them once or twice of these later ones, here. The others we didn't do so much in them, but I drove trucks since 1928 when I started to drive truck and I drove ever since until I was 75, I was 26, I think, when I started to drive when I got my first truck. From then to 75 is...

Joe: About 50 years.

Victor: Yes, more than that, about 50 years anyway, that I've drove trucks and buses. I went a lot of miles. First I didn't go too much, only to Craig and Salt Lake and Price and like that. Then as I got to going farther with the trucks and then with the buses, the way they went, I drove, I guess, just off-hand speaking, better than 2 million miles, anyway, because they add up. The boys have drove a lot too, maybe not quite, yes he drove

right now as much as I have, because since I quit driving, they've been going long distance, so they've drove a good many miles, too.

Joe: With these tours and things? Well, that's interesting report about the bus and that. Do you have anything there in regard to the development of the Basin, the changes that you have seen as you have...

Victor: Yes, when I started out, the roads were not too good, as I've stated before. But as they've got better in the Basin, now we have oil roads, these last buses we got, we keep them on oil roads and we're able to go pert' near everywhere. Like going up on the mountain here to Flaming Gorge, that's all oil. Up onto Blue Mountain, they have it oil to Harpers Corner. We go to Rangely and over to Grand Junction, Colorado up to Douglas Creek, that's all oil. So our roads now, compared to what they used to be, that's where we had first Bobtail trucks because the roads weren't fit for semis. Then as they got better, we went into the semis which we could pull big loads and the roads and bridges would hold them up. That has been one thing that has kept us as we went along, we had to be pretty careful because going off of the road they used to build bridges to take care of a wagon. These trucks and buses weigh 20 tons, empty. Then you get them loaded so we have to watch that. The bridges and the roads have developed now to where we don't have that trouble and that has made a lot of difference as to where we go and what we do. Now we don't need to worry much where we go because we know the bridges and the roads and the service stations and hotels and cabins and things we have, are there to stay and we can get to them. When I first started to haul sheep to Green River City, Wyoming, we used to pack our beds on the front of the trucks and we'd just lay down and sleep wherever we wanted to, the restaurants were pretty good, but there weren't too much hotels in them days. But that has got now to where you can stay pert' near anywhere you want to. So that makes it so we can go wherever we want to. The times have sure changed. The gasoline, motors and the buses, the trucks and everything are so much better, so much bigger and nicer. People look to them and I'd like to say, in my years of working, I've never lost any money on the Uintah Basin people. I used to pack them in quite a little bit, I could pack them, not much. Mr. Meagher, another thing he told me, he said, "Victor, any man that deals with the Bank of Vernal can pay you for hauling his stuff when you get him there. I don't have any here that can't pay you. Let me be the bank and you just collect your money." But I can't do that exactly because the men I know, and I know a lot of men, and I've never been beat so I have nothing to worry there. I've trusted men quite a long time, but they've always been good. They'd come back, they hire me and if they haven't got the money, they tell me about it and we get the job put over and they always come and pay. Hauling in the fall of the year and in the spring when I was in the sheep and the livestock business, I never used to worry about these men or run them down a bit. There never was anything said about paying, they just said, "Victor, can you go such and such a date?" "Yes, I'll take you that day." And I take them and then I take another man the next day and I'm not worrying about that man paying because I'll see him one of these days, and he's always came through. I can look every man in the Uintah Basin, people that I have worked for anywhere else, they've never beat me, they've always been honest and I've tried to be honest with them. If I told them I'd be

there unless something that I couldn't control, I'd notify them different, I've always been there and I've taught my boys to do the same thing and they've done the same thing. We've made it a point that if we say we're going to do something, we try to do it, be there and fill the obligation and be honest with people.

Joe: There's another interesting business that you run, that's your shuttle. Shuttle-bus.

Victor: Yes, a few years ago as the dinosaur got to going there, they decided they couldn't put all those cars that come to the dinosaur up there around that hill, so they decided to use a service. Starting at the bottom of the hill and pull them up on the hill and back, and they came to us, being in the bus business, and we made a contract with them to haul them from the parking lot down at the bottom of the hill up to the top. Then as the thing increased down there, they wanted a nice looking bus, we went back to Wichita, Kansas and got a bus and outfit to pull it, they're nice looking outfits, a little green one, you've seen it I guess. We run that and a few years ago they decided they needed a bigger one when they built this other place where people park there at the dinosaur. So we went and got another awful nice outfit and a trailer that goes behind it and we run them there on the shuttle-bus for the Dinosaur National Monument. We have a contract with them, we furnish wood and drinks down there. It runs about 120 days a year and they've been awful nice people. That's another thing, we've never had a bit of trouble with them, and I lay a lot, give the credit there to my boys because they're on the job. If one of them breaks down, they call us and we're there to get it fixed and they can depend on us and we can depend on them, and they pay us and we've got along very fine with them. Now we've built a store down there, we're going to have there trinkets and things that people can buy going into the dinosaur which we hope will work out because we'll handle it the same way we've handled these other business. And that belongs to my two boys that own the business now, Farron and Wayne and of course I've always been here. After I was 75, I still hang around here and help any way I can. As I said before, insurance rates are so high now and they won't insure a man over 75, the insurance companies. So I've had to quit. That has been quite a hard proposition because that was my life before and now I can't drive. I've got to do something else. But I can help the boys, go with them, they're awful good to me and I do love my family.

Joe: Your shuttle-bus runs up there to Josie's cabin at times, doesn't it?

Victor: Yes, we go up to Josie's cabin from the parking lot here, whenever there's enough to go. We did run it there for a couple of years, we made daily trips. But then as this depression has come on, they've stopped running it to Josie Morris', only as we get a load. But we have two sets of shuttle-buses we have here, so it doesn't bother us much only just start it up and we're ready to go whenever they've got a load to go. Why we have an extra shuttle bus to take it and then we've got that shuttle-bus if anything happens to the one that's running up the quarry, why we can zip back and forth so it's only a matter of a few minutes, and we don't delay the people or the service to them, matter of just a few minutes to get one bus from about a block onto the runway and it's ready to go. So we've been prepared for foresight of Farron and Wayne and with my

help, we've got the thing going so we have a pretty nice setup for people coming, they can depend on us because we've got the two outfits there and are ready to go if we need them. Farron, he keeps them ready to go and Wayne's always ready to drive them.

Joe: In your experience, did you ever meet up with Josie Morris yourself? Did you become acquainted with her?

Victor: Yes, I did years ago when the Gardner down to Jensen, what was his name? Ira Gardner, was it Ira Gardner that lived down to Jensen? He was acquainted with her and kind of a relative. I knew Josie Morris, yes, I've heard several jokes about her, the Chews, and we've worked with them a lot, they're wonderful people too, all the people in the Uintah Basin are wonderful people, they're good people. The Chews, they've told us a lot about Josie Morris and the Blue Mountain setup there when Darnell was killed up there. Those men, Aser Johnson and Willis Johnson and Joe Haslem and other dandy people that we've had lots of association with, we've always done their work, they never did hardly ever call anybody else, if we couldn't go a day, why they'd wait for us a day. We always tried to accommodate them. Josie Morris, they tell one joke about, they found Mr. Chew, the old man, and he killed one of her calves and she hopped off her horse and helped him dress it out and never said a word and said he was kind of nervous a little, and Doug Chew told me this story, and it went on and finally he missed a calf or two so he asked Josie Morris about it. She said, "Now looky here, you started this thing," so he never had any trouble, they quit doing it and got along fine. Josie Morris was a backwoodsman, a woman that took care of herself. She had the stamina and she worked and she told us about the outlaws going through there, they'd go through and if they needed a horse, if they didn't have time to come there, they'd change one and go. She said when the officers came to find out, she knew enough to keep still, not to give anybody away. She helped the law officers and helped the robbers, too, because in them days they couldn't get up on Blue Mountain and over into Browns Park unless you had a horse. There was no airplanes or no cars nor no roads nor no bridges over there. So when you got into that country, you was pretty well an outlaw and that's the way it was run.

Joe: The people that, in reading about her, she was always accommodating to the people that were heading up the mountain or coming down with cattle. She'd see them coming, she'd get her stove going and have some hot biscuits and fried meat there and potatoes and stuff ready for them to eat when they got right to her cabin. She just took care of...

Victor: She was that kind of a woman, she didn't make no difference who they was, whether they were Mormons or Jew or Gentile, she would take care of them and was a friend to everybody and helped all people out. That was a half-way station you could depend on. Of course sometimes, they said when the outlaws and the lawmen were after them, they didn't stay very long, they'd just change one horse and another one and go and vice versa, but she was a friend to them all. And I think the law held her in this, they knew what she was doing and that there was nothing she could do, she couldn't

arrest an outlaw nor take them there, that wouldn't have done. But she could do that and save lots of people, lots of things, by being the kind of woman, and her mother was the same way.

Joe: That's interesting, some of the characters that we had there back in those days, the Chew family were a big family and yet they made all survived all right, and they got along over on Douglas Mountain there, Doug Chew was named after Douglas Mountain. They somehow raised a little garden and a few beef and that, and they just kept that family together and kept them going and they all helped out, it wasn't easy or anything.

Victor: A while before Mrs. Chew died, Doug Chew's mother, she lived in one of my houses I rent here. I got quite well acquainted with her, she was a wonderful woman. One thing I remember, she had saved up a little money enough to bury her and her husband, he hadn't saved up much, he went blind in his later years and not able to, but she had saved up the money and it was awful interesting to me to see the way she took care of herself and the respect she had for her own family and...  
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## SIDE TWO

...remember his wife and the Chews, they were honest people, they were just like the rest of the people in this country, you could trust them. The Chews, I've done their work ever since I've been in the trucking business. I hauled their wool and I hauled their livestock and I went on Blue Mountain and the others on Blue Mountain, Haslems and the Karrens up there, they were all that kind of people. When I would go there at mealtime, I always got something to eat. Or if I wanted to stay all night by the trucks, I could stay there. If I was in trouble, they would come up and help me. And I'd help them, when they started moving their livestock to Colorado up there, Doug did, because he'd got so many and his boys coming along, I used to haul their livestock up in the spring and bring them back in the fall and haul their wool to Craig. All those people, I found out the people of the Uintah Basin had been that kind of people, they were pioneers, they come here, they had hardships, they had to give and take and they've always been that kind of people.

Joe: Could you tell me a little about when you and your wife went out to the temple, about how many years had you served there and your wife served there for a year or two.

Victor: A few years ago, and I was kind of turning the business over a little to the boys, they called my wife and I to go on a short term mission for the church for a year. They sent us back to the Central States where I'd been on my first mission, but they didn't send us the same place, they sent us to Emporia, Kansas then down to Fayetteville, Arkansas where it was a little warmer. I enjoyed that year's mission with my wife very much. She was a companion, just one with me, that's all there was to it, we were one and she was one with me. To take her around, she was not used to traveling, she

always stayed here, that was the trouble with Mother, she took care of this end of the business, and I had done the traveling. But we went on that mission there and that was a wonderful year with that wonderful woman as she could work with people, she knew how and she loved the work. I loved to take her, she couldn't drive because she didn't want to drive among people like that, so she never went anywhere that I didn't take her and I was always glad to take her. We went to meetings and working with the people in Relief Society work, which was most of the work there. I worked with the priesthood and she worked with the Relief Society, fellowshiping people--which is one of the greatest things in the world is to fellowship and get acquainted with people. That's one thing with the bus business, since we've been at that, you work with people there and get to where they know you and you know them and you fellowship them and it makes awful good friends. On that mission, she done a lot of that and enjoyed that mission and we had a nice time. When we came back, we got a call to go to work in the Provo Temple. We were both very thrilled over that. We went out there and, of course, Brother Tuttle was the president of the temple, and he took us right in and gave us nice working there in the temple. Anybody that has worked in the temple knows the spirit and the way of things there, it's the higher education of the Mormon religion. That's where we learn the things that we have here, we worked there, her and I, for about four years. Then her legs got to bothering her, knots in them, and she couldn't stand it. So Brother Tuttle said, "Sister Wilkins, you don't have to work under them conditions, you filled a good mission", so he released her from working in the temple, but he said, "We'd like to have you come, Brother Wilkins, if it's all right with your wife." Mother said, "Why sure it is." So I went to working there in the temple until the Lord called Mother to the other side, but she was sick about a year and a half. I'd like to mention just a little about that when she died. During that time, they wanted me to work out in the state legislature. So I took a month off each year for the days that we worked up in the legislature there, about 60 days. I took that off and worked there. Then we worked in the temple the other days. We arranged that with Brother Tuttle, and that was very fine, so that gave me a wonderful experience up there in the legislature to see how that works and how these laws are made and the way men and women work and how they get along and don't get along and yet always ended up doing pretty good. Then the last year and a half that my wife lived after this trouble that she started to have, I went for about six months, and then it got to where we had to take care of her. So I quit and come home and that was another wonderful experience to spend the last year with my wife. And she said many times, "My, I don't know what we'd do without one another." Well, she's gone on and I'll have to find that out. It's awful hard to get along. Nothing like a wife and a man in a home. Like it says in the temple when they created this thing, the Lord said, "It isn't good for man to be alone, we'll make a helpmate." He told Adam, "We've made you a helpmate, what will you call her?" "Eve, because she's the mother of all living." Mother is the greatest thing in the world, co-creator with God, the Eternal Father. That last year here with Mother to help her get around, to cook her meals, to help her to bed and help her other ways that she needed, to take her in the car when she would go, and take care of her so she wasn't here alone was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had along with my family. That's when we begin to learn more about them. I have wonderful girls. They came in and cleaned the house every week and anything they could do for Mother and me, they done it. Then when



she passed away, the girls would continue to come, the other one comes from Provo. Myrtle lives out there, she comes out and helps us, and the son-in-laws have all been good. They come around, anything I need that they can help, why they help me do it. But this last year with Mother, that year, my it brought us close together. They said, "Well, don't worry," after she'd gone, "We'll take care of you." And they have. My it's a wonderful thing to have them, and I do love them and thank them for it, that's been a great thing in my life. This last year was a wonderful experience with Mother, and now this 2 1/2 years since she has been gone, I've learned to do things for myself and the home she left fixed up for me, and I hope I can live in it.

Joe: That takes a lot of courage to do it, and that is the best place for you, actually. Another thing, maybe you could tell us what some of your duties were up at the legislature, if you could, and some of the people that you met up with there that were special people.

Victor: Well, I met a lot of good people. I met the governor, had quite a little to do with him, running errands for him and the legislature. Governor Rampton was there first, then Gov. Matheson, and they were very fine there, I quit when the republican went in working up there, but those other men were good to work with. And Speaker Jim Hansen, the Speaker of the House, now is a representative of the United States Congress, he's a very good man, president of a stake, high morals, very conscientious man, a man that lived his religion. I never saw him drink coffee or anything like that, or smoke or do anything that was wrong, he was clean and above-board. I had Haven Barlow, the president of the Senate working up there, and he was the one that hired me to work up there, and he was a wonderful man, honest and straight-forward. Bullen was another one, he later quit the Senate and went as president of the Logan Temple. Another very brilliant man, very honest man. Those men and women up there, we find as a whole, are good people. When you go up there, you have 79 representatives, 75 of them and 29 senators of men and women. They are, you might say, the cream of the crop of the state of Utah and the counties. They realize it. They conduct themselves that way. They have quite hard debates sometimes, no trouble, they get worked up debating the different issues, which I learned to realize was necessity, because how do you iron these things out if you don't talk them over? I'm a great advocate of closed meetings to a certain extent. That gives them there in the church and in up there, a chance for people to sit down and talk things over and they don't get out. Where if you have open meetings, you have to be so careful what you say. It seems to me like it's better to have both of them, not just one of them, in discussing some things, laws they want to make or things they want to change, if they can discuss it a little bit among themselves without the public being there and interfering. It isn't that they are doing anything wrong, they are doing right. And my idea has been, it's like the golf course, we have a lot of business done on the golf course. Nothing against the golf course, why do men go there to do business? They go there to do business because they can get away and do a little business without the public hearing about it. My opinion is that that is a necessity in government as well as in other walks in life. A man and his wife has certain things that they talk over that the whole world don't need to know about. The same way all the way up the line. I found up there in the legislature that those kind of

men, that's the way they were. One of our men here, Glade Sowards, president of our stake, was Speaker of the House while I worked there. Glade conducted that very nicely, he had a way about him. He acknowledged the lower down. We have some people there like this one that was elected from Ogden, I better not mention any names there, but down the line he needed a lot of help. We had others the first year in the representative, they didn't know what to do. Well, Glade and Jim Hansen and all of them, those leaders were very good to help those kind of people get initiated to where they know how to make laws. I met the Attorney General, met the judges there. We have one judge there, Hall, Gordon Hall. I guess to tell you who he was, he's Rock Hall's son. He came from Vernal. He's the main one now, he's over the judgeship, he's the presiding judge, did you know that?

Joe: No, I didn't know that. Is he a brother to Gene?

Victor: Yeah, that's where he come from. You remember...

Joe: Yes, I remember Rock Hall.

Victor: Well, that's his son, he's a wonderful man. I met those class of men up there in their caucuses. I met lots of people that came in, sheepmen, cattlemen, manufacturers come it to talk to them. I worked as a doorman, they called me, then I moved to different positions in different ways there where I got to meet all the businessmen, and there was a lot of them come up there during the legislature. I worked there 12 years in the Senate and in the House together, so it gave me a pretty good opportunity to meet them and know how the laws are made and run errands to different. I had a car there and I guess they figured I could drive so they'd send me different places after different men and to take senators sometimes to places when they didn't want to call a cab, why I'd take them there.

Joe: But, you had to live right there in Salt Lake.

Victor: This was a good thing. One reason I went after I got there was glad I did, was I could take my wife with me. Although she wanted to kind of rent a house out, an apartment somewhere, she said, "I believe we could do that cheaper than staying to a motel," but the motels are pretty good to people who work up there. First I stayed at the Newhouse Hotel, they gave me quite a rate. Then I stayed to a motel the last few years and he gave me a good rate. But I enjoyed my wife being with me, I wouldn't have went if I couldn't have took her, but I could take her and the one thing about it, it gave Mother a chance to rest. It took her away from here, the boys didn't have much to do that 60 days I was gone and they'd take care of the books while she was gone and then she'd get them up when she came back. But she could go there and she could get up when she wanted to, and she could go to bed when she wanted to, and there was restaurants there in the motels and hotels so she didn't need to go out if she didn't want to, and we could go at night when I'd get back, get off a little early, I could take her and we'd go where we wanted to. So her and I had a wonderful time there those 12 years I worked up there, she was with me all the time. We stayed there and it gave her a chance to

rest and get along. We really enjoyed being together and going out and eating. We went to a few shows where it was warm and nice in January and February, we had a nice warm room and I really enjoyed it with her, and the experience I got there to know how these laws and things are made and how they iron them out.

Joe: We've talked about the legislature, but can you now tell us something about your service as a county commissioner?

Victor: The county commissioner. I taught the boys, they said, "Why don't you go ahead, we're doing pretty good", as I was getting a little older and they were taking more of the load. That's another thing, my boys and my girls always have been with their mother and me, the boys with me, they'd always take the hard trips as we got older. I always able to carry my end pretty well, as I said before, I never had much sickness, but they always took the heavy end of it. They said, "Why don't you try the county commissioner?" So I was lucky enough to get elected and I learned there that working with people, you have to learn to work with them. Here with these boys, they generally, whatever I said, they'd go along with because we generally talked the thing over and worked it out. And I thought, well the county commissioners, maybe that would work, but it didn't work. I found out that you have to work, there was three of us there, no one can put anything over, you've got to work with the other two because you've got to have at least two to get anything put over. But I worked there with Rulon Hacking, Blaine Morrill, the first two years, they were good fellows, we worked good together and got along good together. Problems came up we were able to discuss them and meet with the people of Uintah County and found out their likes and dislikes and what they needed and then decide what we could do. I realize because my life had been to not waste money, I never had any to waste, and I didn't want to waste any there and I tried to be economical, Ru Hacking was along the same way. Blaine Morrill, they were good men and all LDS so I had a good bunch to work with. In working with them, to find out these things or work these problems out, the Asphalt Plant was a great thing to us there, they were just getting started good when I was put in there. We learned to mix it there, we had to change that there workings of asphalt up there and I enjoyed that working there, we had good road foremen and the men that worked were all Uintah County men and they all worked for the betterment of Uintah County and Ru and Blaine were that way. Then the next two years Blaine and Ru lost out and I worked with Bert Angus and Hy Slaugh. We got along fine, no troubles. They left a little more for me to do than they did because I was older and they was both working, not that there was anything wrong, they'd do anything you asked them to do, but they said, "Well, you're right here in town and you've got a car and your boys handling the business, well, you just as well attend these meetings and things, which I did. I learned there, that's when Gov. Rampton started his meeting with the county commissioners every month of the state, so they insisted that I take that on and that was a good thing. I learned quite a bit about Gov. Rampton how he operated and how the different commissioners operated and then the conventions they held. While I was up there, they sent me to Washington DC to a national conference of the county commissioners. I went once in the four years. I enjoyed that very much, that's when Nixon was elected the second time and the governor from Georgia, what's his name? The one that got shot.

Joe: The one that was with Jack Kennedy you mean? I guess I don't know that one.

Victor: Well, I guess I better pass it up, hadn't I. But I went back there and met them and the different county commissioners and heard the talks of how the government was run and saw it and it was worth a lot to me to have that experience with the kind of men and women we met. And the banquets, to go to them, one thing that used to get me a little, there was quite a bit of drinking and smoking you'd get in those banquets. I noticed quite a bit of difference there than the way ours was here in Utah and with the Mormons, because our meetings and conferences and things, we don't have them things. Back there, that seems to be the, in Washington especially there, they had an hour or two before they held their meetings and some of them got pretty well clogged up 'til they'd disgust you a little in talking. Yet, it made you think and appreciate Mormonism again. Because we are told that these bodies in the 89th section of the Doctrine and Covenants that they were given unto us and if we'd treat them right that the Lord would protect them. The destroying angel would pass us by. I have found out that the Word of Wisdom is a mighty good thing to live.

Joe: Which committees did you work on mostly as a commissioner?

Victor: Us three worked together while I was in there. We didn't take any particular committees, we divided the county kind of in three divisions and yet we talked all three of the divisions over. We didn't try to do anything that we didn't all three have a word in, we'd talk it over before we started any projects or road or anything like that, we always talked it over. Met with the road foreman and told our men, we went together a lot around over the county and we worked together.

Joe: You had something to do with the straightening out of the road across Brush Creek that used to go up to Dugway there, didn't you?

Victor: Yes, I had the Diamond Mountain layout. I used to haul livestock off from there a lot and so Ru and me was quite interested, he had sheep up there, so him and me, Blaine went along with us, we worked on that one up there and looked it over. I showed him what I thought about bringing truck loads off of there how they ought to fix it and explained when we changed that comeback, they had going out of Brush Creek, was coming off of Diamond Mountain, get down to there, your brakes were hot and you'd have to slow right up get around them turns. I showed him what I thought about making the road straight up there, and we had the engineers to help us although they didn't want to do it at first, but after we kind of convinced them, why they give in and we had Niles Haslem then, was road foreman. He said, "Well, I can do that, Victor and Rulon," he went up there with us and showed us what he thought. Niles had a pretty good head on him, knew how to make roads. We tried to use some good common sense all the while we were in there, not so much your engineers as much as good common sense in straightening that road out. After we got that straightened out in one or two other places, it made quite a lot difference in bringing cattle and sheep off from Diamond Mountain with the trucks, the brakes didn't get so hot. We were very lucky over the

years, I don't know of any very serious wrecks that was ever on either Brush Creek or Diamond Mountain with the livestock haulers. We've had other things there, but while I was commissioner we worked on that and we fixed the road down into Horseshoe Dugway there and other roads that we worked together on. We designed one every now and again, and whenever it was necessary to go look at different things if we couldn't all go, and wasn't necessary that all of us go all the time, so we tried to work together and do it that way.

Joe: The road over toward LaPoint. Was that while you were in?

Victor: Yes, the road to LaPoint, we fixed that up. That was built while I was in, rebuilt. Blaine, he was from the west side and Ru and me and him went over it and the engineer, state engineer, and the Uintah engineers, we went over it and figured out how we'd like it built, all of us, then it come up to what we was going to use for topsoil. Ru and me was quite enthused over using the asphalt. So we talked to the state engineer and these others and we got water on to that asphalt plant and we found that we could mix it and how to put it on. It gave work here to our boys here so we got them to put asphalt on that road. I come over it the other day, I noticed it's a pretty good road yet, standing up and going through it, we straightened it out, straightened that hill out there where you go down in the Horseshoe Dugway. We all three worked and we had to make a little detour in LaPoint to keep from buying one person out there, they wanted a big sum and we decided that wasn't a good thing to pay too much money, it was easier to go around just a little bit and it didn't hurt the road, so we just didn't buy the land and spend the money, we made the road and fixed it so it was a good road and still is.

Joe: That was real proof that asphalt is a good surface to put on top of gravel roads, or dirt roads.

Victor: We mixed the gravel and the asphalt together and kind of ironed them out and put the graders on there and worked it so it worked up good together. Then we run the rollers on it and roll it down, took the big chunks out so we didn't leave big holes in the roads and it made an awful good road.

Joe: The same way one of the first times they paved the Twist, they used asphalt on that.

Victor: Yes, they used asphalt on that.

Joe: It proved, it seems like it doesn't crack like your plat-mix.

Victor: It will crack, then when it gets hot in the summer, it goes back together, so it don't upend and brake all up. The asphalt has been an awful good thing for our roads here in Uintah County in my estimation. You notice where you don't have to tear them up and rebuild them after the frost comes, because we have a lot of frost here and they'll give the frost and then settle down.

Joe: I don't know whether you've heard that there's possibly a plant that's coming in here that's going to work a lot of this asphalt and they oil it around to take out the oil then there's a beautiful sand in that asphalt, beautiful white sand and they're going to use that to make glass with, glass factory.

Victor: Is that right? Well, that'll be a wonderful thing, because we have a lot of asphalt.

Joe: Well, it runs clear down the ridge to Green River and up that other way pert' near to White Rocks, way up there. So it's a product that has got to be an asset to us if they can get something started like that to have a little industry here in the valley, it'll mean a lot to the people of this community and Uintah County.

Victor: We was for that when I was commissioner was very much so and hung on to that lease. We like to oil roads, and Uintah County at that time had more black-top roads than any other county in the state.

Joe: John T. Pope was the first one to patent that, wasn't he? That is he filed and did assessment work on that asphalt hill. There used to be a town right back into that asphalt hill that John T. Pope made.

Victor: Teddy Longhurst was quite a hand to do that.

Joe: They filed on the place where there was a little bit of oil running out there by the Black Dragon Mine. They caught that in a barrel and sold this oil and Van Massey used to use it for feeding the horses.

Victor: It was awful good for horses. We used to haul quite a lot of it in here, different people let them have it. The sores on horses or bad feet or cracked, we used to paint them with that Whiskey Creek Oil, they used to call it, from out there. It was Van Massey used to say it was good for man or beast either one. But it was, it was a good oil. Collier out here used it in his machinery.

Joe: Walt's brother, was it...

Victor: Well, Walt used it a little in his transmission and for his machinery over at the mine, I worked over there for two years when I was first married in that mine, Colliers mine.

Joe: On Brush Creek over there.

Victor: On Brush Creek.

Joe: We went over there a time or two and got coal and...

Victor: Yes, I remember your dad and me going over there lots of times.

Joe: You go over there in the wintertime and these tired wagons going over that snow, you could hear them for a mile. I remember one morning my dad and I got up about 4:00 and left for there and had a lantern under a blanket there, we had two wagons. Part of the way, I'd walk along behind the wagon there and the other team in head would go along pretty good pace and this other second team, they'd follow right behind them.

Victor: Yep, just right over there. That was quite an experience working over there in Colliers Mine on Brush Creek. That hole, the roof wasn't high enough, you had to bend over....

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